

BOATHOUSES

REGULATIONS  
AND  
HISTORIC STANDARDS  
FOR  
CONSTRUCTION  
AND  
ALTERATION

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HISTORY OF THE BOATHOUSES

First built in 1859 or earlier, simple wooden boathouses once lined the lakeshore on either side of entry to the present City Pier or both sides of the pier itself.

Boathouses were first relocated in 1887 when some were moved further west to permit the "Steamboat Pier" to be widened to accommodate railroad tracks. The Northern Central Railway Trains thereafter served the steamboats docking at the pier and provided passenger and cargo transportation to and from the Village of Canandaigua.

By 1888 over 80 boathouses in the "steam basin" contained mostly simple skiffs. Some larger boathouses contained 2 or more boats, including sculling shells, sailing yachts and steam yachts.

In 1903 when the pier was next enlarged, the Village of Canandaigua decided to build three finger piers at the southwest end of the pier and to require boathouse owners to relocate there.

When the first two finger piers were completed in 1903, some owners moved boathouses to the finger piers; other people built new boathouses on the finger piers in 1903 and 1904. Moving boathouses across the ice during the winter of 1903-1904 saved many of the boathouses from demolition.

In 1904 boathouses at the mouth of the "feeder creek" exiting the lake next to what is now Seager's Marina were demolished to make room for a swimming school to be built by Mary Clark Thompson. By 1904 there was room for twenty-eight boathouses on the two finger piers and thirty-seven on the main pier. By 1905 the third finger pier was built and new boathouses were being constructed there

The boathouses were used almost exclusively to store boats, but some of the companies shipping produce by rail from the pier stored grapes and other farm products in boathouses after removing them from steamboats. At least one boathouse on the shore west of the pier contained a restaurant. Demolished in 1908, this boathouse was considered an eyesore among the many rustic and simple wooden structures which lined the shore, the pier and the finger piers.

Photographs from the early 1900's show mostly one story wooden structures with gable roofs on a north-south axis, designed and used to store boats. Their rustic design and lack of ornamentation reflect an earlier, simpler life style and area residents' continuing use and love of the lake. The rustic nature of the old boathouses has been captured by local artists and photographers and they remain a unique and picturesque reminder of our heritage.

REGULATIONS

The boathouses are currently regulated by the following sections of the municipal code:

- Chapter 287: Boats, Docks and Waterways
- Chapter 714: Construction Code, Uniform
- Chapter 850: Zoning
- Article XI: Historic Zoning

**The following is a brief summary of pertinent sections, but should not be considered a complete record of all applicable regulations.**

HISTORIC  
APPROPRIATENESS

The following standards shall serve as guidance for the City Planning Commission in reviewing boathouse construction and alterations. For these purposes alterations are defined as "a basic change in design, material, or outward appearance, including a change in the color, of any external feature". Maintenance, repair, or replacement with the same materials is not considered an alteration.

In reviewing applications the Planning Commission shall approve plans that are consistent with the historic character of the boathouses as they existed between 1904 and 1930.

The most common mistake made in boathouse design and renovation is to project elements of Victorian architecture upon the vernacular architecture of the boathouses. While many historic structures in Canandaigua do display the grand and ornate style of the Victorian Period, this style is neither appropriate nor compatible with the character of the boathouses. The traditional boathouse style is that of a modest vernacular. They were simple one story, front-gabled sheds, which served a simple function - the storage of boats.

Massing and Building Form

The historic boathouse district is characterized by a definite rhythm established by the similarity in massing and building form of the individual structures. Structures are deeper than they are wide and the roof ridgeline typically runs perpendicular to the finger pier.

New boathouses should have a single gable roof, with a slope of no less than 4 in 12.

**Decks / Platforms / Balconies**

While boathouses of the referenced historical period did not have sun decks, simple first-floor platforms are appropriate for the purpose of entering and exiting boats. Some boathouses did have second-story balconies. A narrow balcony may be permitted on a pre-existing boathouse where there is evidence that the boathouse once had a balcony, or on entirely new construction. Carved spindles and ornamental posts are not considered appropriate.

**Siding**

Boathouse siding is typically simple vertical board-and-batten or horizontal-lap siding. While vinyl and metal siding have been used in the past they are not historically appropriate. Vertical t-111 or synthetic materials may be considered appropriate when they impart the same visual appearance as natural wood. Metal siding remains acceptable on sides of buildings not visible from the finger piers or lake.

**Roof**

Historic photographs suggest that the boathouse roofs were simple wooden planks, or sometimes, wooden shingles. Although metal roofing materials were used in the 1904 - 1930 time period, industrial metal roofing materials often do not convey the same visual appearance as a standing seam, "tin" roof.

Asphalt shingles and rolled roofing are considered appropriate.

**Doors**

Historic photographs show simple door designs - vertical planks, with large external hinges and no window lights. Raised-panel doors of a Victorian design are not appropriate, neither is ornate hardware.

Simple, painted wood or steel doors are considered appropriate.

**Windows**

Original boathouses had few, if any window openings. There is limited documentation showing some boathouses with small, simple window openings near the doorways or in the gable. Divided-light or arched windows, decorative moldings, sills, or ornamentation are not appropriate. Simple double-hung or fixed pane windows are considered appropriate.

**Appurtenant fixtures**

No light, sign, deck or any other appurtenant fixture or ornament, may be erected or displayed on any boathouse or finger pier without approval from the Planning Commission.

Although the original boathouses were not wired for electrical lighting, external lighting has been approved. Carriage lights or lights with a historic or nautical theme are considered appropriate.

Signs larger than 2 sq. ft. are permitted only for those boathouses where commercial uses are permitted. Signs constructed of painted and/or carved wood are considered appropriate.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

Application for a building permit to alter any boathouse structure shall be made to the City of Canandaigua Code Enforcement Officer. Upon the filing of such application the Code Enforcement Officer shall forward the application to the City Planning Commission.

Applicants shall submit scaled drawings fully describing existing and proposed construction. Such drawings shall include information related to the proposed structural materials and finishes, including color, window and door specifications, and special equipment such as electrical service, kitchen facilities, and sanitary facilities.

**REQUIRED PERMITS**

A building permit shall be required for any work on a boathouse including, but not limited to, the construction, enlargement, alteration, or demolition. A building permit is required for roofing.

Building Permits are issued by the City of Canandaigua Code Enforcement Officer. Prior to the issuance of building permit alterations are referred to the City Planning Commission. See “Historic Appropriateness”

Construction shall conform to the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code

**ZONING REQUIREMENTS**

In 2006, many of the boathouse regulations were moved to the Zoning Ordinance with the creation of a BH Boathouse Zone District. These requirements may be appealed to the Zoning Board of Appeals in accordance with local and state laws.

**Use**

Boathouses shall be used only to provide storage for a boat and for uses necessarily appurtenant to the keeping of the boat. No boathouse may be used as a dwelling, sleeping, lodging or boarding place.

Boathouses adjacent to the City Pier may be used for restricted commercial operations in accordance with §850-110 and approval by the City Planning Commission of a Special Use Permit.

**Miscellaneous**

All new or reconstructed boathouses shall contain a boatwell (that is unfloored area, open to the lake water, within the boathouse structure), at least four feet six inches in width and at least 12 feet in length, and shall have a doorway on the lake side (at the rear) of the structure at least five feet in width and six feet in height. No boathouse shall be altered to remove an existing boatwell.

Outside decks or platforms at the first floor level of no more than 80 square feet are permitted provided that the total length of the boathouse including the deck does not exceed 32 feet.

Any new boathouse constructed or substantially altered shall be equipped with gutters and downspouts to direct roof drainage into the lake.

Existing boathouses, decks, boatwells, and pilings shall be maintained in a structurally sound condition.

**Size & Area Requirements**

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
<u>Width:</u>	6 feet	23 feet
<u>Length:</u>	6 feet	32 feet
Including all decks and platforms.		
<u>Height:</u>	NA	15 feet
From boardwalk to the peak of the roof.		